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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000742

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SUBJECT: SPLM HOLDS SEMINAR ON ABYEI ISSUE

Classified By: PolChief Eric Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: An SPLM presentation explained the background of the Abyei border issue and argued for implementation of the report of the Abyei Boundaries Commission as a key component of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. After explaining the rationale behind the decision, they rejected the notion of a provisional administration for Abyei. Minister of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor, who made comments in summation, subsequently advised that the real issue was interest in potential oil reserves rather than ethnic strife or grazing/watering rights. Failure to implement the report, however, placed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement at risk. End summary.

ABCs of Issue: A Review of Agreements and Maps

¶2. (SBU) On March 18, the SPLM held a three and one-half hour presentation on the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) report. The presentation involved a line by line examination of the Naivasha Protocol and Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) as well as a review of materials prepared by British cartographers over the years. Their presentation maintained that the final line marking the northern territorial limits of Abyei split the difference between the southern extent of Misseriya habitation patterns and the northern area of historic Ngok Dinka settlement areas.

¶3. (SBU) The event, held at the University of Khartoum and attended by more than 250 individuals, including diplomats and international organization officials, concluded that the ABC decision should be implemented as an important step in the implementation of the CPA. The SPLM presenters, who included the SPLA Secretary for Political Affairs and two members of the ABC, recalled that the ABC report was final and binding. Any decision, they said, to defer its enactment would imperil the CPA overall. The presentation, so far delivered in Rumbek, Yei, and Juba, would be offered in other locations as well in order to build public understanding and acceptance of the eventual implementation of the ABC report.

Provisional Abyei Administration a Non-Starter

¶4. (SBU) The presenters rejected the notion of a provisional administration for Abyei; this would lock in Misseriya officials in an area that rightfully should be under Ngok Dinka leadership. A wide range of questions and comments ensued, with a closing statement in Arabic by Government of National Unity (GNU) Minister of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor

addressing most and appearing to satisfy the audience.

Min. of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor Explains Hidden Agenda

15. (C) In a private meeting with Pol/Econ Chief on March 20, Minister Alor said the SPLM was interested in having the ABC experts return to Sudan to provide an explanation for their decision; a patient detailing of their rationale, he believed, would satisfy skeptics. Most are not aware of the details of the ABC report and lack knowledge of the history of the area and of factors taken into account in rendering a decision. He added that during the Naivasha process the SPLM had offered the NCP a settlement process wherein Abyei elders would discuss the boundary and make a recommendation, which would in turn be "blessed" by experts.

16. (C) Alor added that allowing the region to be administered by an interim body would not be practical; how could a region be governed if it is not defined, he asked. He said the NCP had proposed an SPLM administrator and a 70/30 ratio of officials, owing to Abyei's location in the North. The SPLM had rejected this gambit flatly, with GNU First Vice President Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) President Salva Kiir responding that Abyei was in both the North and the South. Allowing Misseriya to co-govern Abyei also introduced the complication of the likelihood they would want to vote in the referendum five years hence.

17. (C) Alor also said that the National Congress Party (NCP) had a hidden agenda with respect to the ABC matter: it sought to give the false impression that hesitancy in implementing the report was due to Misseriya pressure for grazing and watering rights, which was not the case. The NCP

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instead is hopeful that oil would be found in the area and endeavored to win as large a portion of the region for the north as possible. Allowing the public to believe that Misseriya) Ngok Dinka disputes were a key issue was a smokescreen. Furthermore, NCP unwillingness to implement the ABC report served to feed rumors that the GNU was reluctant to implement the CPA in general.

STEINFELD